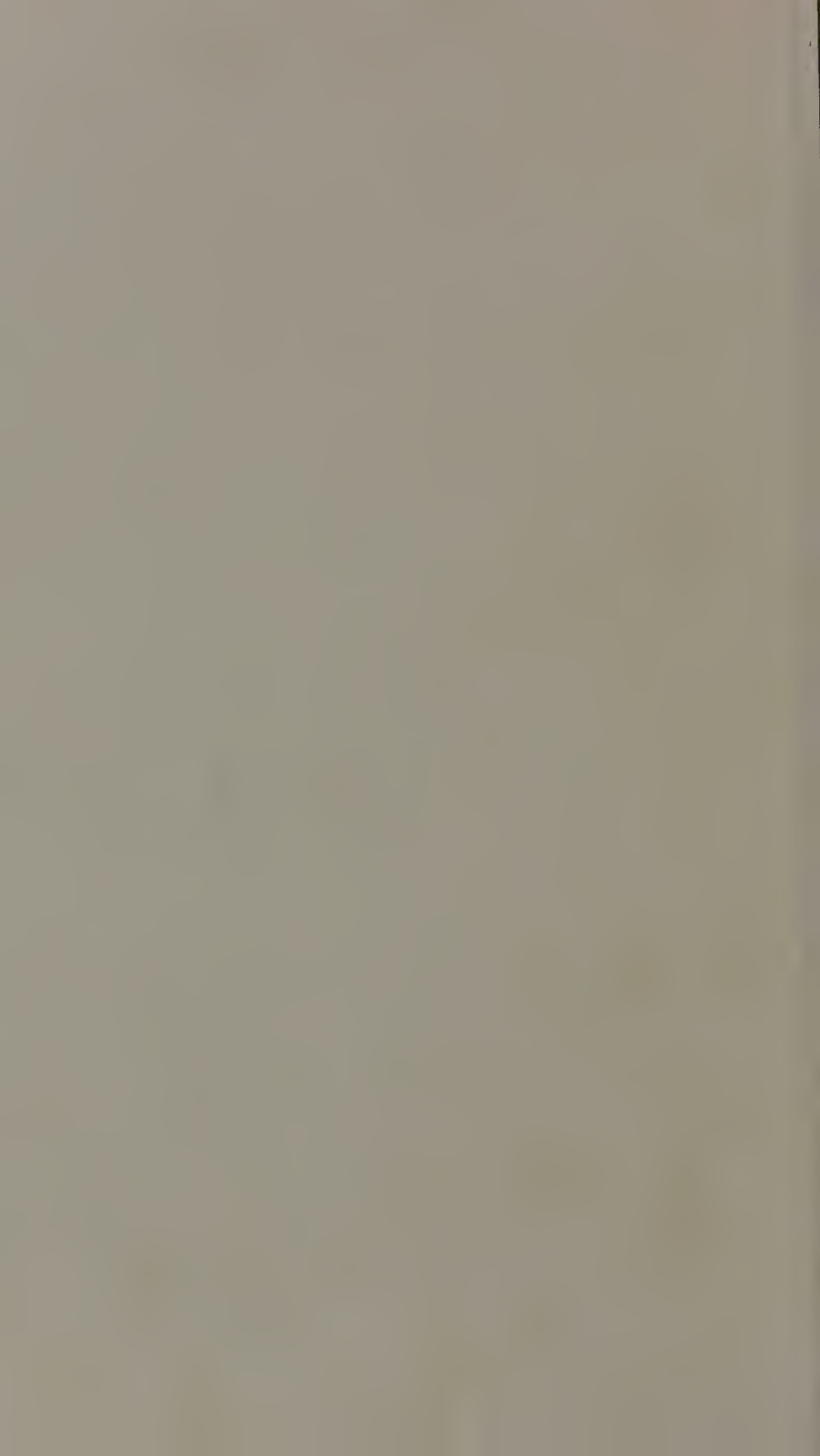




A GUIDE
TO
M A D E I R A:
CONTAINING
A SHORT ACCOUNT
OF
FUNCHALL,
WITH
INSTRUCTIONS
TO SUCH
AS REPAIR TO THAT ISLAND FOR HEALTH.

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1801.



A GUIDE
TO
M A D E I R A.

“OF all the places we are acquainted with, perhaps the island of Madeira enjoys the most equal temperature; but the voyage, and other circumstances attending it, afford very formidable objections;” says Dr. Fothergill, in his Remarks on Consumptions, vol. ii. page 156, Lettsom’s edition; also, Medical Essays and Enquiries, vol. v. page 345.

“ In all places regard should be had to the situation; that it be dry, near no stagnant water, not environed by thick wood, where the water is good, and the air free, but not stormy and tempestuous.” *Ibid.*

This opinion of Dr. Fothergill’s, has been confirmed by every subsequent observation

made in that island. Its situation is more to the southward than any part of the european continent, or the Mediterranean sea. The town of Funchall is built in a valley, open only on the south to the Atlantic ocean, and defended on the N.N.W. and N.E. by immense mountains, which towards the north are a mile in perpendicular height above the level of the ocean. From these mountains the rivers take their rise, and flow with such impetuosity to the sea, as to prevent any stagnation of their waters.

The coolness of the atmosphere, near their summits, much increases that condensation of the air by land which produces sea breezes, and these always increase in proportion to the heat of the sun. Hence the temperature of the air varies less than in any other part of the world; the thermometer, within doors and not exposed to the sun, being frequently steady for twenty-four hours together, and seldom rising higher than 70 or 75 in summer, or sinking lower than 60 or 65 in winter,

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From these various advantages Madeira is exempted from the fevers so prevalent in tropical climates; ague is a disease scarcely known, and dysenteries are less troublesome than even in England. It is, besides, defended from those northern blasts which visit every part of Europe and the Mediterranean islands * during the winter; and which, though not frequent, are, when they happen, sufficient to destroy all the advantages that a residence of several months had produced.

Such a situation could not but be preferred, by medical people, for the winter residence of consumptive or scrofulous constitutions; but this, like many other remedies, has been over valued or abused.

Consumptive patients have been sent thither in such a state as to die during their voyage, or on the very night of their arrival, or while waiting in England for convoy; and many in such a state of the disease as nothing can relieve. Those who arrive at a period

* See Cleghorn on the Diseases of Minorca.

of the complaint sufficiently early to recover, are often anxious with regard to their reception in the island, and, for want of other accommodations, are obliged to quarter themselves on merchants to whom they have letters of credit.

Though Dr. Fothergill wrote so long ago as the year 1775, and though the malady, to relieve which it was written, is of all others the most fatal to the inhabitants of the british islands; though it interests our sympathy more than any other, and though the victims to it are frequently among the most elevated and opulent, yet the difficulties of the voyage, and other objections hinted at by Dr. Fothergill, remain nearly as great as ever. As, however, all these difficulties may be in some degree alleviated by previous information, it is hoped the following hints will not be ill received.

The first difficulty is the voyage, the inconveniences of which are greatly augmented by the war, on account of the uncertainty of captures, convoys, the time of sailing, &c. &c. On this account, it is always desirable

firable to embark in a neutral vessel, if such can be found with accommodation fit for persons in a delicate state of health. In order to gain every possible information, a mercantile friend should be requested to enquire not only at London, but at Liverpool, Bristol, Hull, and all the principal sea ports. From Liverpool, armed vessels frequently sail of sufficient strength to be permitted to depart without convoy; at Portsmouth, vessels are sometimes detained which are considered in London as upon their voyage, because their papers and letter bags are removed from the coffee-house used by the captain.

As to the price of the passage, it must depend on such a variety of circumstances that no certain rule can be laid down; since the war it has varied from twenty to thirty guineas; and, in many instances, a captain may take advantage of this neutrality, or the supposed anxiety of the applicant, to enhance his price. All this must be governed by the urgency of the case, as well as the season; but it will always be adviseable, to leave every negotiation of this kind in the

hands of mercantile persons accustomed to such transactions.

If the patient coming out be a female, it will be awkward without a maid servant: during the voyage she will probably be attended also by a friend or relation; if the latter, it would be most desirable, and that the female servant should not be in the bloom of youth, nor one who will be above the office of superintending the kitchen.

Those who are unaccustomed to sea voyages may not be aware, that it is absolutely necessary to secure their births as well as their passage. In all cases, not otherwise specified, those who apply earliest have the choice of cabins, and no time should be lost in securing the most agreeable. For this purpose a friend should go on board, and fix every thing with such accuracy that no room can be left for future cavil.

Sea sickness is one of those ailments which depend so entirely on constitution and habit, that no general rule can be offered to prevent

vent it altogether, nor any certain means to alleviate it. Some advise, to struggle as much as possible against it by being continually on deck in an erect or sitting posture, and by eating in spite of every repugnance. Others, on the contrary, prefer a horizontal posture, till frequent and short experiments enable them to remain erect; and by no means to attempt eating, till the repugnance in some degree subsides, or only to begin with such quantities as will be least likely to affect the stomach. The writer has tried both these methods, and would not scruple to recommend the latter from his own experience; but others, with whom he has conversed, have not found the same advantages from it.

Persons of known property will never find any difficulty in procuring letters of credit on Madeira; but the exchange is so much to their disadvantage, that it will be always desirable to bring guineas or dollars with them. The system of exchange is so complicated to those who are unaccustomed to such transactions, and so simple to the foreign merchants, that without entering into intricacies

intricacies of exchange, premiums on bills, or attempting to explain the nature of nominal coins, I shall confine myself entirely to real money. Most of the current coin of Madcira is spanish, and consists of testoons (commonly called bits), pistreens, and dollars. To have a perfectly simple idea of the value of these, we must lay aside all mention of pounds and milreas (coins which, being purely nominal, may be represented in any manner in different countries), and confine ourselves to guineas, as a real coin and current in some way in most parts of the world. With respect to guineas, then, we may consider bits as sixpences, pistreens as shillings, and dollars as crowns. Now, as every bill drawn in Madeira will probably be paid in England, it will be very easy to calculate whether bits, pistreens, or dollars, can be purchased on such terms in England; as, after paying the insurance of them, they shall cost no more than sixpences, shillings, and crowns. Even supposing they should somewhat exceed that value, it may be worth while to bring such a quantity as can be conveniently packed up with baggage, to supply immediate wants, and allow time to
study

study the nature of money negociations in the island. If this be omitted, and currency should be scarce on your arrival at Madeira, it is not improbable, that for your bills of exchange on London, you will receive no more than about eighteen pistreens for every twenty shillings you draw for, besides putting the merchant to whom you are recommended to some inconvenience.

On arriving at the island, it will be advisable for some person (if the patient be a lady, or in too feeble a state) to land, and, as the town is not large, to leave all his letters of introduction, in order to make enquiries concerning accommodation. Those of the tavern are ill calculated for invalids, and the private lodging houses, though less exceptionable, are far inferior to those to which the English are accustomed at home.

As an encouragement to others, a physician*, well known amongst the London faculty, has attempted to establish a house for

* Dr. Adams; for the particulars of this establishment enquire of Mr. Baxtar, at Apothecaries' Hall.

the better accommodation of invalids coming to the island. Other attempts of the same kind are now making; but the progress is slow, and must depend on the encouragement met with. At all events, families who intend to reside any time in the island, will do well if they can bring with them common furniture, as that is with difficulty procured, though houses for temporary residence are not very scarce.

If the invalid is comfortably accommodated on board, it will be much better that he or she should remain in the cabin, with the ship at anchor, till every thing is prepared on shore.

Almost the only expences for a stranger in Madeira is for his table and lodgings. There are no places of public amusement, no wheel carriages; and strangers are, on all occasions, excused those ceremonious visits which require expensive dresses. Such ladies, however, as attend their sick friends, will have many opportunities of obliging the natives, if they bring with them the last fashions; nor need they ever fear, that they can be reckoned

reckoned too shewy. The principal amusement of the place is riding on horseback on paved roads; for which reason, the cattle are all rough shod, thereby rendering them extremely safe; and if the pavement is less agreeable than the english gravel, the rider is not annoyed either by dust, or the meeting with carriages or unaccommodating riders. Nor does any uneasiness arise to the rider from the pavement, the horses being taught a pace which, in spite of rough shoeing, renders this exercise after a little use quite as easy, though less expeditious than in England. Such as wish to bring their favourite horses with them, will find that they readily accommodate themselves to the Madeira roads, during such short rides as invalids ought to take.

As it is the custom of this country for women to be rarely seen in the streets alone, it is absolutely necessary for a family to have at least one portuguese man servant. His understanding english, or not, will not be of any consequence for more than two or three weeks; by that time, the servants will easily comprehend each other.

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The provisions of the island are pretty good for a country so far to the southward. The butchers meat is well tasted, though it has neither the colour nor fat of the english markets. Poultry are dear and lean, so that it is usual to buy them before they are full grown, that they may fatten as they increase. The bread being all made of leaven, instead of yeast, is extremely light, and has a sour taste to those who are unaccustomed to it; but this, in a few days, is no longer perceptible. As every house is furnished with an oven, many families bake their own bread. Vegetables of all kinds are plentiful, though dear. Fish is very fine, and in great variety. During winter, the most desirable residence is the airy part of the town of Funchall. Those who arrive from England at that season are at first so enchanted with the softness of the climate, and the verdure of the hills, that they conceive nothing can be so delightful as a house in the country: but many inconveniences attend this plan; for none of the houses being furnished with fire places, excepting the kitchen, nor fitted up with that nicety which the uncertainty of the english climate requires, an occasional cold
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day, such as frequently occur in the summer months in England, is felt by an invalid, and the more so in proportion as the situation of his house is more elevated. It is also much more desirable for a person with weak lungs to have company at home than abroad. At his own house he retires when he pleases; he plays his rubber, or attends to the conversation of such as drop in, without the necessity of speaking himself, which is often of no inconsiderable consequence. Nor has he, after that exertion which must always attend large parties, the necessity of leaving the company at an early hour, or remaining till fatigue renders him incapable and very unfit to encounter the open air in returning home. For though the evenings are milder here than in many regions farther south, or where the days are much longer, yet there must ever be a difference between a crowded room and the open air. All these inconveniences are much increased by the nature of the english society in Madeira; the parties being always large, and the invitation usually for dinner, nor do they break up before supper. If an invalid is seen at one of them, the consequence is an invitation to others; which, in

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politeness,

politeness, he feels awkward at declining. If, as he ought to do, till some time after his arrival, he declines them all, he becomes more secluded than is either agreeable or advantageous to his health, unless his house is so situated as to induce single people, or small tea parties, to make those snug visits which are the chief pleasure of an english life. Another error into which invalids are very apt to fall, is a laudable anxiety of seeing every thing the island exhibits different from their own country.

The pageantry of religious professions of nuns, ceremonies in the churches or convents, are all attended with a fatigue highly injurious to such as have made so long and expensive a voyage for health. The processions too, are mostly in the evening, a little before sun-set. The invalid is, therefore, invited to dinner at some house where the spectacle passes; here he meets a large party, waits with an impatience which often produces a degree of irritation in a weak habit, and, at the very worst part of the twenty-four hours, exposes himself to the window after being heated perhaps by a crowded

crowded room, and a still more crowded table of hot provisions. The other ceremonies are attended with no other inconvenience than the length of time the attendance requires, and the unwholesome air the patient must breathe, from the great collection of people in the same room.

Many invalids, after feeling the relief of the winter months in Madeira, are anxious to return to England; and some are very naturally alarmed at the prospect of an intensely hot summer, in a country that affords so favourable a season during winter. It should, however, be remembered, that the spring in England is frequently a very trying period for convalescents. It is, therefore, always advisable that such, as have not repaired to the island at so *early* a period of the disease as to leave little apprehension of a relapse when the symptoms have disappeared, should at least continue long enough to arrive in England about the end of June, or beginning of July. Even those who have had the disease in its more advanced stage, may probably with safety return about that time; but it is very unlikely they should be

able to bear the succeeding winter in England. It will, therefore, remain for themselves to determine, whether they prefer three voyages—with a few months among their friends, in a climate at all times uncertain—to one voyage, with a longer absence from home. As to the summer climate in Madeira, it is of all others the most delightful. From a quarter of a mile to a mile and a half from the town, the sky, for the most part unclouded, exhibits a most beautiful blue tint; all the country is covered with vines, excepting here and there a few patches of yams and sweet potatoes, and, in other parts, of wheat, whose yellow appearance at an early part of the summer serves to heighten the verdure of the surrounding country. Nor are fruit-trees of european or tropical climates wanting. The former consisting of apples, pears, standard apricots, and peaches, exhibit at this season a profusion of fruit, unparalleled in our less grateful soil. The latter are principally evergreens, consisting of oranges, lemons, guavas, pomegranates, bananas, &c. But the form of the island is peculiarly calculated to afford every one the benefit of those inestimable

ble blessings—light and air. By the steepness of the mountain no house, however near, can prevent the one above it from receiving the sea breezes, which from the mildness of the heat may be said rather to fan than blow. Along this whole space, the inhabitant of the cold climate of England will never complain of heat when not in exercise, which his own prudence will teach him to avoid during the hot part of a sunny day. And though rain is almost unknown near the valley during the summer season, yet the condensation of vapours from the tops of the mountains, frequently produces cloudy days, during which, horse exercise may be indulged in with the greatest safety and pleasure.

In this situation a convalescent may often continue with safety till near christmas, visiting the town as often as the arrival of a vessel invites him to enquire after news, and returning on horseback if his lungs have not acquired strength to encounter the fatigues of the hill. From that time, his stay in the country must depend on his health and feelings; and if both these are equal to bear-

ing the coolness of his summer residence, he may remain, without returning to Funchall, till the advance of spring renders it safe for him to satisfy the doubts and impatience of his family and friends by returning to England.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION

OF THE

ISLAND OF MADEIRA.

HE who has never made a sea voyage beyond the continent of Europe, will be much struck with the first sight of Madeira, if fortunate enough to make the island in the day-time. Notwithstanding all the accounts he may have heard of its immense height, no sooner does he come within view of Porto Santo, a comparatively trifling island both in extent and height, but he instantly conjectures it to be Madeira. As he advances, he makes the Desertas, which, from the view he has of them appearing like a single island, undeceive him from his first error only to lead him into another. At length, the island of Madeira itself appears in sight, while the others still continue in view, and soon con-

vince him that what he before considered as highlands, are comparatively speaking plains.

In the centre of the highest mountains of Madeira, when viewed from the east, is an opening somewhat resembling a crescent, which is often visible when the mountain is covered with clouds; the magnificent appearance of which can scarcely fail to remind the spectator of Virgil's description of heaven—

“ *Panditur interea domus omnipotentis Olympi,*” &c.

On approaching nearer to the island, it loses much of its beauty, the eastern side being less cultivated than any other part; but on doubling the cape, called by the english the Brazen-head, the circular bay of Funchall, the town itself, the valley, and progressive height of the hills, produce an effect it would be vain to attempt a description of. At this distance, the town and houses appear so minute, being all white, as to be easily mistaken for broken fragments
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of a chalky beach : but on a nearer approach they somewhat resemble the tomb-stones of an english church-yard, or the pieces of a wood marked for the game of domino. The vessel now, in order to avoid being becalmed, stretches to the southward, then south-west, and at last approaches the town, which, as well as the scenery above, grows constantly more and more beautiful as you advance. The anchorage being at some distance from the beach, the town still appears to great advantage, the best houses being the highest, and the number of churches and other public buildings affording a rich and very pleasing variety. By this time, too, the country houses (all of which are in view, from the nature of the country) form a very pleasing relief to the verdure with which they are surrounded.

On entering the town, it loses much, perhaps an englishman would say, all its beauty. There are scarcely any regular streets, or any that can be called wide. The large houses are indiscriminately mixed with the small, and the pavement resembles that of the

worst of our country towns in England. However, though so little pains are taken to keep it clean, it cannot be called dirty. Most of the streets are on a declivity, and have currents of clear water running through them with a rapidity that washes every thing before them. The only open place is a public walk, with four rows of trees, extending from the cathedral to the franciscan convent, at one end of which is the parade, where the military are mustered; and in this parade are the public fountains, built of Lisbon marble.

All the houses of any consequence have their principal rooms in the upper story, which overlooks the neighbouring smaller buildings, and thus enjoys the sea-breeze: they have, besides, high turrets, commanding a view of the surrounding country and of the sea. From these elevations the inhabitants frequently observe sails before they can be discerned from the signal places; and, by the help of spy-glasses, conjecture the country from which they may come, the cargo they may bring, and the houses

to which they may be consigned. As they approach, faces are recognized on the deck; and, if the vessel appears from the eastward, expectation is on tiptoe for the news both public and private.

If from Lisbon, as the portuguese are prone to conjecture, their anxiety is not less for letters than that of the english when an arrival is from London. In the last case, the enquiries after news are universal; the reports equally numerous and uncertain; and nothing is known, with any precision, till the London papers get into circulation, or till each individual resorts to the house whose letters bear the latest date, or at which he is the most intimate. But the enquiries do not end with the first reports, or the inspection of the public prints; captains of ships, if tolerably intelligent, and still more passengers, are interrogated to explain and correct doubtful passages, to detail such news as, though afloat, are not circulated through the public journals, and even to give their opinions on public matters, public men, and parliamentary speeches; but the first and
last

last enquiry always is, whether there is any probability of peace?—Such as understand english, and their number is great, *are* early in their application for a sight of the papers, and frequently translate their contents extempore to others with a facility, correctness, and even elegance, that surprise an englishman, however well acquainted with the portuguese language—with a facility, I may add, which the english in vain attempt to imitate when they translate the portuguese into their native tongue.

But to return to my description of the houses. The ground-floor is devoted entirely to wine and other stores; and, in the public streets, the front is usually divided into small shops. If there are two floors above, the first is usually of a very low pitch, being intended for servants' chambers and other offices. The upper floor is the most lofty, each room being heightened in the centre by the cove of the roof. The old houses consist of plain plaster walls, without any enrichments, the ceiling being of wood, because till lately no stucco was introduced

produced sufficiently good to be depended on for the horizontal parts of the ceiling. The modern, and indeed many of the old houses, both among the english and portuguese, are now enriched with panelled walls, and the ceilings adorned with foliage and other devices. Still, however, the walls require further relief; though they are generally ornamented with english prints, well framed, which are to be met with in great profusion in almost every dwelling.—It was formerly the custom for the natives to be satisfied with lattices instead of glass windows; but such is the increasing wealth, and with it taste for luxury, that few, excepting the poorest houses, are now found without sashes.

The character of the portuguese is universally polite, though their manners, to such as are unaccustomed to them, may sometimes appear officious and troublesome. No one meets a well-dressed stranger without taking off his hat, and feels offended if his salute is not returned. But their civilities are not confined to forms, and there are few
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but are ready to shew a stranger his way, and give him every other assistance in his power. Among the poor, a seaman who pleads that he has been left by his ship, and that in consequence he is without money and clothes, never fails to be kindly received, and share their morsel with a family who often feel it difficult to support themselves. The rich are not less ready in offices of hospitality, which would be more generally proffered; but that some accidental misconceptions have made them fearful lest their civilities should be misinterpreted, or rather from an uncertainty how they may be received.

By degrees, however, the natives have acquired somewhat not only of the english dress, but of the english manners. The cocked hat, sword, and buckles, have gradually given way to the shoe-string and round hat, excepting in visits of ceremony, or among officers of the revenue, who are obliged, even to the custom-house clerk, to appear on duty in full dress. Many of the labouring mechanics still continue attached
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to their long cloaks; but this is principally to hide the implements of their trade, as they consider it disgraceful to be seen carrying any thing in their hand. Such, therefore, as have an apprentice or labourer to attend them, frequently appear in the english or rather french dresses. It is the more proper to remark this, because, from the custom of dressing assassins on our english stage in long cloaks, there are few ladies, on their first arrival, but suspect a dagger under every *capota*. Whatever may be the case in other parts, assassination is scarcely known in the island of Madeira: this probably arises partly from the little power possessed by the higher ranks, by which the inferior class are less exposed to their oppression, and consequently feel the less revenge. Another reason may be the impossibility of escape, in an island not more than forty miles in length, and ten in its greatest breadth. Among the higher orders many gentlemen speak english fluently, and have been educated in Lisbon or in England. Some of the ladies are also not unacquainted with the language, though they are too
timid

timid to venture on speaking it: most of them speak french, and some with fluency and ease. Their modes of life are daily more and more anglicized, though they still retain some mixture of the manners described by Mr. Murphy, in his very pleasing description of Lisbon. It is, however, certain there are, in no part of the world, characters more interesting, more affectionate, more sincere, or more ennobled with exalted notions of true friendship, virtue, and candour to the failings of others, than some of the female inhabitants of this island. But it is unnecessary to dwell longer on subjects of this kind. Whoever resorts to Madeira, should go there in pursuit of health; for neither the climate, the country, nor the characters of the inhabitants, however amiable, are sufficient to divert that *ennui* which the long residents of a busy metropolis and a colder climate must always feel from the sameness of every succeeding object. But while health, the first of all blessings, is the end in view, every other consideration will subside, or while the acquisition of wealth appears to be necessary, the mind will be sufficiently

sufficiently engaged ; but, without some pursuit, paradise itself (and such Madeira may in many respects be stiled) would become vapid and tedious, unless the whole man be absorbed in the contemplation of Nature and her works. But minds thus tempered will wish for a more frequent and uninterrupted intercourse with congenial spirits, than the present state of the world any where affords.

